Bertrand Russell, Polymath

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BERTRAND RUSSELL, POLYMATH

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1. Introduction.

Bertrand Arthur William Russell was born in Ravenscroft, his parents' home near Trelleck in Wales, on 18 May 1872. His father was John Russell, Viscount Amberley, the eldest son of Lord John Russell (later 1st Earl Russell) of Reform Bill fame; his mother, Viscountess Amberley, had been Kate Stanley before her marriage. Her father, the 2nd Baron Stanley of Alderly, was also prominent in the Whig aristocracy. Lord and Lady Amberley had advanced opinions for their time: they favoured, for examples, free thinking in religion, birth-control, and woman's suffrage. Their intention was to educate their children in these beliefs, but their eldest son, Frank, proved unmanageable and had to be sent away to school, and they both were dead before Bertrand's education commenced. Amberley, who died after his wife, appointed in his will two atheists as guardians of his sons, but the Russells successfully contested the will and had the boys assigned to them. Thus it came to pass that Bertrand Russell was educated by a succession of tutors (as well as by his grandmother, aunt and uncle) at Pembroke Lodge, the Russells' grace and favour mansion in Richmond Park.

The Russell family had always, since the reign of Henry VIII, had members who were active in the service of the state, and with Amberley dead and the other adult males ineligible for one reason or other and with Frank showing every sign of being an unpredictable adventurer, the family's hopes—or perhaps it was only his grandmother's hopes—settled upon Bertrand. He must be trained to assume the role of his grandfather and one day he, too, would be Prime Minister. His education was broad therefore; for in addition to mathematics which he found delicious, he must know history, especially the role of the Whigs in it, English literature, in order to develop a good prose style, science, because it underlay the progress which Lady Russell took for granted, and French, German, and Italian, in order, one day, to be able to conduct affairs with foreigners.

His early life was one of great ease. Besides himself there were in Pembroke Lodge only his grandmother, his Aunt Agatha, and his Uncle Rollo. Frank was there only for school vacations. To look after the Russells there were eleven servants, so no Russell ever had to do any ordinary household chore. In addition, there was a succession of governesses (in the earlier years) and tutors (in the later years), nearly all foreigners, who looked after Bertrand's intellectual development. None of these stayed very long because Lady Russell did not want Bertrand unduly influenced by anyone but herself and her children. When there were signs that Bertrand and a tutor had developed a personal as distinct from a formal relationship, the tutor was dismissed often without even being allowed to bid Bertrand goodbye. At lesson time there would simply be a new tutor.

By his early teens it had become apparent to all that he had intelligence. He would, therefore, have to go up to University, but every University in those days required a knowledge of Greek and Latin for admission. Russell had a smattering of each, but more was required. The drastic expedient hit upon was to send him to an Army crammer's school in London. Despite the fact that he was shocked by the gross behaviour of his classmates, the first people of his own age with whom he had extensive association, he flourished sufficiently to pass the entrance examination to Cambridge and even well enough to win a minor scholarship.

His early bent toward mathematics had proven to be his major talent and he enrolled at Cambridge in the autumn of 1890 in the Mathematical Tripos. He had been lucky in having Alfred North Whitehead read his scholarship examination. Whitehead saw more ability displayed in Russell's work than in that of any other candidate, although another student got a higher mark. Acting upon his judgment regarding talent and ability, he burnt all the papers and recommended Russell for the scholarship over the man with the higher mark.

Russell completed the work of the Mathematical Tripos in the spring of 1893. He did not come out at the top of his class, rather he tied for seventh place. His failure to place higher may be due to the fact that he found the way mathematics was taught at Cambridge profoundly unsatisfactory. Nearly all the "proofs" were, in his settled opinion, fallacious, because they appealed to principles which were nowhere stated and defended. An example is the use of superimposition in the proofs of Euclidean geometry. Nowhere is it laid down that a figure lifted through the third dimension retains its shape, but this must be the case if a proof based upon the superimposition of figures is to go through. He was developing into a critic of mathematics, a characteristic not tested for in examinations, so his marks were lower than those who had no doubts about what they had been taught and who had learned it well.

Foundational work in any branch of knowledge requires a knowledge of philosophy, and by the time he finished his mathematical degree Russell had come to realize this. Accordingly, he stayed on at Cambridge for a year of study in what was called the Moral Sciences Tripos. In that year he studied the core of philosophy: its ancient and modern history, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. The Russell Archives at McMaster University contains most of the essays he wrote for these courses[1] and they show him developing the critical skills without which his subsequent work would have been impossible. In the examinations for this Tripos he was awarded First Class Honours.

Post-baccalaureate work in his day at Cambridge was confined to writing a dissertation which, if its readers so recommended, led to election as a Fellow in the College to which it had been submitted. If no favourable recommendation was made, the candidate had no recognition for his work but had, presumably, benefitted from the exercise, and might get a teaching position elsewhere. Russell decided to try for a Fellowship at Trinity College, but he was uncertain whether to write a dissertation on the foundations of geometry, which his teachers suggested he do, or in economics, a subject in which he had had no formal training but which was of great interest to him. After much thought and consultation with friends, he decided upon the former largely because he could use what he had learned in both of his Triposes.

He did not abandon the study of enonomics, however, although he proved to be more interested in its political side than in its mathematical side. His first book, *German Social Democracy* (1896), is an early fruit of this study. It was published a year before the book he made from his dissertation on the foundations of geometry.

2. Logician and Mathematician.

James Ward, one of Russell's teachers and examiners in the Moral Sciences Tripos, suggested, when congratulating Russell on the excellence of his examination papers, that he consider writing his Fellowship dissertation on the foundations of geometry. Ward, in one of the courses which Russell had taken under

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1. These essays will be published in *Cambridge Essays, 1888-99*, Volume 1 of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1983.

him, had lectured on the rise of non-Euclidean geometries, and the philosophical problems generated by this new development, especially for the Kantian philosophy which Ward defended. Kant had assumed in writing *The Critique of Pure Reason* that geometry—and in his day there was only Euclidean geometry—was a finished science, and one of his problems had been to provide a philosophical basis for geometry which would render it immune to Humean scepticism. Now the rise of non-Euclidean geometries threatened to undo Kant's work. Russell was urged to explore the problem and to see what could be done to save the Kantian philosophy.

Russell was very much under the influence of his philosophy teachers when he set to work on his dissertation. The dominant philosophical trend at Cambridge, with the notable exception of Henry Sidgwick, was Germanic in its origin. Kant, and especially Hegel, were thought to have shown the way philosophy was to develop. Nearly every student, Russell included, adopted this position almost without thinking about it. Students read Kant, but they were not encouraged to read Hegel; they imbibed what they were told were Hegel's views from lectures. Only later did Russell read Hegel. When he did he suddenly saw that the Hegelian philosophy, particularly in its philosophy of mathematics, was muddled and confused, so he abandoned any defence of it.

During his work on the foundations of geometry, however, he took the Kantian and Hegelian philosophies for granted. Since Kant had tried to answer the question, "How is geometry possible?", for the geometry of his day, Russell determined to answer the same question in the light of the new non-Euclidean geometries. He did arrive at an answer to the question, but he was shortly shown to be wrong by the work of Albert Einstein. Einstein used, in his general theory of relativity, a geometry which Russell had thought to be impossible. In *My Philosophical Development* (1959) Russell offered the retrospective judgment that his dissertation was "somewhat foolish" (p. 39). At the time it seemed in the mainstream of philosophy and Cambridge University Press brought it out in 1897 under the title, *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*.

Geometry is but one branch of mathematics and Russell, having examined its foundations, turned his attention to the philosophical foundations of the whole of the subject. He worked diligently over the next several years producing draft after draft of a book on that topic. He learned by his failures, and when, in 1900, he attended a mathematical congress in Paris he recognized at once that Giuseppe Peano, an Italian, who had much to say in the discussions, had by far and away the surest conception of the questions and the best vocabulary for talking about them. Russell asked Peano for copies of all his writings which he immediately studied with great care. They provided him with solutions to problems which had held up his own work. He completed *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) about two years after his meeting with Peano. In it he argues that mathematics is a branch of logic, and, therefore, that logic provides the foundations for mathematics. This thesis, which has come to be called "the logicist thesis" and its defence "logicism," had been arrived at independently by Gottlob Frege, a German mathematician, but Russell came to know his work only after his own book had been written.

In the course of his work on *Principles* Russell made a very unwelcome discovery. Georg Cantor, in a work which Russell was studying, gave a proof that there is no greatest cardinal number. Russell thought the proof must be fallacious because, it seemed obvious to him, the number of things in the universe must be the greatest cardinal number. So he decided to apply Cantor's proof to this number.

Application of Cantor's proof necessarliy involved Russell in work with the concept of class, for it was well known that given any number of individual

things the number of classes they give rise to is greater than their number. Given, say, three things, eight classes are realized: the empty (or null) class, three classes with one (different) member each, three classes with two members each, and, finally, a class containing all three as members. In general n things form 2^n classes. So Russell had to consider classes if he wanted to think about the largest number to which the world gave rise. This exercise led him to a very interesting class.

In daily life when we have to think about classes we form them, almost without thinking of what we are doing, by putting into them everything which has a certain predicate. Thus the class of rare books has in it everything of which it is true to say that it is a rare book. The principle used here, called by logicians "the principle of extensionality," seems utterly obvious. Everyone who had written about classes, up to and including Frege, had assumed it without argument. "Every predicate determines a class" seemed a cardinal canon of common sense.

Now one of the predicates we use is "class" itself, and it was a consideration of it that Russell believed would provide a refutation of Cantor. Applying the principle of extensionality to "x is a class" leads directly to the class of all classes. Russell noticed an odd feature of this class: it could be partitioned into classes that are not members of themselves, for instance, the class of rare books is not itself a rare book, and classes that are members of themselves, for instance, the class of non-books is itself a non-book and so is a member of itself. His attention settled upon the first of these, the classes which are not members of themselves, which he dubbed "ordinary classes." Since they all have a predicate in common, namely "is not a member of itself" or "is an ordinary class," they form a class, to wit, the class of all classes that are not members of themselves, which we shall call O. Then Russell asked, "Is O a member of O, or not?" and came to an astonishing conclusion. On the one hand, if we assume that O is a member of O, then it follows that O is an ordinary class; but no ordinary class is a member of itself, therefore O is not a member of O. On the other hand, if we assume that O is not a member of O, then it follows that it is an ordinary class (because it is not a member of itself); therefore, O is a member of O. Russell has proved that O is a member of itself, if, and only if, it is not a member of itself. This is as flat a contradiction as is possible, yet if follows from the common-sensical notion of class. Since its publication this contradiction has been called "Russell's paradox."

Discovery of the paradox brought work on a constructive proof of the logicist thesis to a halt, because one of the fundamental principles involved, namely, the principle of extensionality, had been shown to have a fatal flaw. It led directly to a contradiction, and, since from a contradiction any proposition whatever can be "proved" deductively, it would follow that, if the extensionality principle were retained unmodified, all mathematical propositions, both the true ones and the false ones, could be "proved" as theorems of the system. This will not do. Some change is demanded, but it is not at all apparent what change would tame the principle without also eliminating some (at least) of its benign uses.

Communication of the paradox to his fellow workers in the foundations of mathematics caused grave concern. Frege replied that his life's work was in ruins and that arithmetic itself was tottering. Whitehead failed to cheer Russell by telegraphing the final line of Browning's "The Lost Leader": "Never glad, confident morning again."

The solution which Russell sketched in an Appendix to *Principles* and later developed into a full-fledged theory was called by him "the theory of types."

The germinal idea for this theory consists in noticing that the paradox arises when we ask whether 0 is a member of itself. If we were to rule out the possibility of self-membership, then the paradox would be avoided. But what price would have to be paid? Just this: it would be impossible to admit any classes that are members of themselves, which goes somewhat counter to our intuition that, for instance, the class of abstract ideas is itself an abstract idea. After examining many alternatives with what proved to be more serious defects, Russell developed the theory suggested by the germinal idea just discussed. Everything is arranged into a hierarchy of types, and the membership relation holds between members of a lower and next higher type; things of the same type are not allowed to be members of themselves.

Another original contribution which Russell published in *Principles* is his discovery of a way of defining the cardinal numbers, the numbers we use to answer questions of the form "How many?" A definition must state what all uses of the term being defined have in common. In the case of, say, the cardinal number "two" all that all of its uses have in common is that each of them applies to a pair as subject. Two, then, seems to be the class whose only members are pairs. Using this insight Russell developed a way of determining what a pair is that does not involve use of the number two. It would take too much space to report his procedure here: his book, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1919), written in Brixton Prison in 1918, gives an elegant, and accessible, account of the way he does it. All the cardinals can be defined in this way: zero is the class of all empty classes, one is the class of all unit classes, *etc.* He also defines the notion of cardinal number itself: a cardinal number is the class of all similar classes, similar classes being defined as those whose members enjoy a one-to-one relationship to the members of all the others. "A one-to-one relationship" can be defined in purely logical terms, so there is no circularity.

The Principles of Mathematics argues the philosophical case for logicism, but a philosophical case alone is not good enough. Russell promised a second volume in which a constructive proof of the thesis would be given, all symbolically worked out. He was able to announce in the Preface to the book that Alfred North Whitehead had agreed to be co-author of Volume II. Whitehead had in 1898 published Volume I of his *Universal Algebra*, the second volume of which promised to develop the thesis of the first in a more systematic and more symbolic way. Whitehead, upon reading Russell's *Principles* before publication realized they were engaged in similar projects and suggested they join forces. Thus began one of the most important collaborations in the history of philosophy and science.

Principles was published in 1903 and the first volume of *Principia Mathematica* came out in 1910. The project had outgrown its early conception as a second volume of *Principles*. Its authors had to bring together in one symbolic language the work of many earlier scholars in logic and the foundations of mathematics. They had to discover a set of axioms from which other propositions could be proved; they had to devise ways of reporting those proofs; they had to keep the language manageable by introducing abbreviating definitions at appropriate places in the chain of proofs; and they had to write it all down. In about equal parts *Principia Mathematica* is a work of analysis and a work of synthesis. Many analytical problems had to be solved in the course of its generation; and much synthesis of the original work of others had to be effected in order to fit the fruits of their work into the grand architectonic being built. The publication of the first volume established, at a stroke, the discipline commonly called symbolic, or mathematical logic.

One of the most difficult of the problems which Russell had to solve in

the course of his work on *Principia* concerned the proper analysis of phrases like "the author of *The Principles of Mathematics*." Such phrases are perplexing because they function almost like names in sentences. The police must resort to such phrases, called "definite descriptions," in their work, for until the perpetrator of a crime is identified the usual way of referring to him or her is by "the criminal who did *X*." Indeed, everybody uses definite descriptions, for we more often than not do not know the names of those we talk about, but that does not stop us from talking about them. When definite descriptions do uniquely refer no logical problems arise. But they do not always uniquely refer: *Murder on the Orient Express* is a good example of "the murderer of *A*" systematically misleading the reader, for, as it turns out, there are many murderers. And sometimes definite descriptions do not refer at all, as, for example, in talk of "the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow." In daily life we manage, correcting ourselves as we learn more about the world. But in mathematics Russell could not tolerate such uncertainty: he wanted to know whether, in a given case, "the fourth root of x" refers or not. Moreover, if it doesn't he wanted a way of evaporating it so that he was not forced to postulate some subsistent, but non-existent, fourth root of x which served as reference for the phrase.

He published his solution to the problem as "On Denoting" in *Mind* for 1905. To glimpse the way he solved the problem, consider "The present king of France is bald," one of his favourite examples. Whereas this appears to be a single statement, Russell argued it is really three statements rolled into one, any one of which can be true or false. They are in English:

(1) There is at least one present king of France;
(2) There is at most one present king of France;
(3) Whoever is presently king of France is bald.

Analyzed in this way (1) turns out false, so the original statement is false. Other examples are false in different ways. "The author of *Principia Mathematica* is learned" is false, because when expanded into three statements, (2) is false, since the book has two authors. Finally, "The present Prime Minister Canada is female" has (3) false in its expansion.

Russell's theory of definite descriptions permits a way of handling a number of troublesome statements. To deny the existence of the golden mountain we have to say "The golden mountain does not exist" and this seems to commit us first to postulating something, namely the golden mountain, and second cancelling that postulation. On Russell's theory no such commitment, however tentative, to the existence of such fabulous entities is required. Largely for this reason he regarded his theory of descriptions as his most important original contribution to philosophy. Others have also granted its importance, for it is now an integral part of every textbook in symbolic logic.

Volumes II and III of *Principia Mathematica* were published in 1912 and 1913. They carried the development of mathematics to a study of positive and negative integers, ratios, and real numbers; there are also sections dealing with the application of the various kinds of number to measurement. Volume IV, which was never published, was to have been written by Whitehead alone; it was to have brought geometry into the system. The work on the Second Edition, published in 1925, was the work of Russell alone. He wrote a very long introduction summarizing the work which had been done in symbolic logic since the date of the First Edition.

Principia, as I have mentioned, offers a constructive proof of logicism. How well has the thesis fared since its publication? By making all their assumptions explicit, Whitehead and Russell offered the critics of logicism a

clear focus for their attacks. The controversy over the best foundations for mathematics has gone on from 1910 (and earlier) to this day. Logicism is one contender in the field. It has had its defenders who have offered more elegant systems than that found in *Principia*, but which would not have been possible had *Principia* not gone before. The matter has not yet been settled to everyone's satisfaction, and anyone who works on the question must come to grips with the extraordinary system which Whitehead and Russell developed.

3. Philosopher.

When the great labour of *Principia Mathematica* was behind him, Russell turned his attention to those philosophical problems which seemed amenable to solution by the new logic he had helped, in part, to discover, and, in great part, to develop. Throughout the years he had been working on the foundations of mathematics he had also made contributions to philosophical literature. In 1900 he published an important book, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, in which he argued for a new conception of Leibniz's philosophy as being deductive consequences from a few, mainly logical, principles. Shortly thereafter Louis Couturat published his *La Logique de Leibniz, d'après des documents inédits* (1901) which advanced the same thesis and which presented evidence from Leibniz in support of it which had not been available to Russell. Leibniz attracted Russell because he too had seen in logic the foundation for other studies. Indeed, Leibniz had dreamed of a universal language by the use of which men could calculate when they found themselves in disagreement and rationally and unemotionally determine who was right and who was wrong. The nearest approximation to Leibniz's universal language which the world has seen is the language of *Principia*.

In 1910 he collected together some of the more important essays he had written in the preceding years and published them in a book entitled *Philosophical Essays*. The principal concern in that book is with the notions of truth and falsity, and the theory he defends is that truth consists in correspondence with fact. Other essays concern pragmatism, ethics, and the study of mathematics. Also reprinted is what is undoubtedly Russell's most famous essay, "The Free Man's Worship," first published in 1903. Not a philosophical essay in any sense of "philosophical" that Russell himself ever espoused, "The Free Man's Worship" was presumably included, partly to boost sales, but partly also to get across to the reader the detachment Russell thought essential for doing good philosophical work. The philosopher "in his professional capacity ... should leave behind him kindness and all other emotions with the exception of curiosity," he wrote in the Preface to the Norton Edition of *Mysticism and Logic* (1929), in which this essay is also reprinted. The best philosophy is that done from the most impersonal point of view.

Before he could turn his full attention to the application of mathematical logic to philosophical problems he was obliged, by a promise he had made to Gilbert Murray, to write an introduction to philosophy for the new Home University Library series. The audience for this book was unlikely ever to have heard of the new logic let alone know anything about it, so the book had to written in a traditional vein. Russell worked easily within these constraints, writing *The Problems of Philosophy*, which was published late in 1912, in a very short time. In correspondence with his friends he called it his "shilling shocker," presumably because it attacked the prevailing idealism and argued vigourously for a realistic position in metaphysics. Indeed, he defended a dualistic position: there is mind *and* there is matter, and he offered answers to some of the principal epistemological questions based on this metaphysic. The book was

enormously successful and is now regarded almost universally as one of the best, perhaps even the best, introduction to philosophy ever written.

In the spring of 1913 he told friends that he was now ready to write a big book on theory of knowledge which would make extensive use of the new logic. In May he started to write turning out about ten pages a day. By an early date in June he had produced 345 pages of manuscript, and he was in very high spirits both with regard to his rate of production but also with respect to the high quality of the argument. While he was writing it he was visited by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who had first come to him as a pupil in 1911 and had gradually been accepted by Russell as an equal. He showed Wittgenstein his manuscript. Wittgenstein was very critical of it, and Russell, in the face of this criticism, lost his confidence. He abandoned the manuscript, although later in the year he offered the earlier chapters for publication as a series of articles in *The Monist*. The reconstructed manuscript will be published as Volume 7 in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*.

Some of the thinking that had gone into the abandoned manuscript was turned into another book written later in 1913. This book, *Our Knowledge of the External World, as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* was first read as the Lowell Lectures in Harvard University in the spring of 1914. The principal thesis of this book, as its subtitle indicates, is to argue for a new method in philosophy, modeled on the method of science which has proved so successful. The proper method for philosophy is an analytical one which makes use of the new logic to break up large problems into a series of smaller ones. The smaller, or more restricted, problems can frequently be solved precisely and exactly, thus diminishing the area in which we have to depend upon speculation alone as to what may be the case. Grand synthetic systems ought to be a thing of the past, Russell argues, because they have not advanced knowledge; at best they have offered a precarious comfort to their believers during the brief span in which they have remained unrefuted. But refutation always comes to these systems, and when it does they must be discarded entirely because, being all of one piece, no part can survive refutation.

A tentative, piecemeal approach to the problems of philosophy, with hypotheses advanced for others to test, will ensure that some, at least, of the outstanding questions will get answered. Of this Russell was confident. The new logic provided a powerful arsenal of weapons just waiting to be used. In his book, and in many essays, Russell shows how these weapons can lead to fresh hypotheses which have a good chance of being true. The hypotheses advanced are not like scientific hypotheses: they do not talk about the world. Philosophical hypotheses are *a priori* (prior to all experience) and *general* (applicable to all possible worlds). "*Philosophy is the science of the possible*," he wrote in *On Scientific Method in Philosophy*, a pamphlet written in 1914, and it is "indistinguishable from logic as that word has now come to be used." (p. 17)

During the next two decades Russell continued to apply this method to some of the central problems of philosophy. In the course of this work he gradually shifted his metaphysical position from the dualism of *The Problems of Philosophy* to a neutral monism, which was first advanced by William James and taken up by many of his American followers. Neutral monism is the doctrine that the fundamental stuff of the world is neither mental nor material, but that the properties peculiar to mind and matter emerge from different arrangements of the same fundamental stuff. Russell's earliest work toward developing this metaphysics took sense-data to be the fundamental stuff. A sense-datum, for my purposes here, can be thought of as the momentary appearance of a thing from a distinct point of view. To be a *sense*-datum at all it must also be present to the perceiver who occupies that point of view at the moment in question. Using this

insight Russell laid down general procedures for constructing ordinary things out of actual and possible sense-data; the biography of a given perceiver is to be similarly constructed (using also the data of inner sense). When the biographies of the thing and the perceiver have members in common we say that the perceiver is seeing the thing.

For various reasons, too technical to be reported here, Russell became dissatisfied with his first candidate for the fundamental stuff. During the 1920s he hit upon what he believed was a better building block, namely events. "We shall find, if I am not mistaken, " he wrote in *The Analysis of Matter*, "that the objects which are mathematically primitive in physics, such as electons, protons, and points in space-time, are all logically complex structures composed of entities which are metaphysically more primitive, which may be conveniently called 'events'. It is a matter for mathematical logic to show how to construct, out of these, the objects required by the mathematical physicist." And he goes on to the more general point: "To show that the traditional separation between physics and psychology, mind and matter, is not metaphysically defensible, will be one of the purposes of this work; but the two will be brought together, not be subordinating either to the other, but by displaying each as a logical structure composed of what, following Dr. H.M. Sheffer, we shall call 'neutral stuff.' We shall not contend that there are demonstrative grounds in favour of this construction, but only that it is recommended by the usual scientific grounds of economy and comprehensiveness of theoretical explanation." (pp. 9-10) *The Analysis of Matter* was published in 1927. It continues and completes the project begun with the publication of *The Analysis of Mind* in 1921.

Neutral monism remained Russell's metaphysical position. His later philosophical work concerned questions in the philosophy of language and in epistemology, especially, in the latter case, the problem of non-demonstrative inference. *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940) is concerned, in part, to offer an analysis of the way that sentences, taken as unities, mean, and also to provide an account of truth and falsity as properties of these same entities. This book is quite technical, and is for specialists. The theory of truth and falsity which it expounds for sentences which talk about the world is one Russell defended throughout his philosophical career. The truth of a sentence results from a correspondence to fact; falsity from a failure of correspondence. Facts are unitary, non-linguistic, and complex; empirical sentences are unitary, linguistic, and complex. We succeed in talking about the world because this parallelism exists. This account is greatly over-simplified, but it conveys the gist of his position.

In *Human Knowledge, its Scope and Limits* Russell turned his attention to the topic of non-demonstrative inference. This is the sort of inference involved in reasoning when the conclusion is said to be probable given the truth of the premisses. It is a vast subject and may be thought of as complimentary to the sort of inference so exhaustively studied in *Principia Mathematica*. That inference is demonstrative: the conclusion is certainly true, if the premisses are true. Both kinds of inference are used in science and in daily life, so a complete philosophy should provide an account of both. Russell's conclusion, which he advanced tentatively in *Human Knowledge* is that non-demonstrative inference assumes the truth of five postulates. These five postulates, which require too much explanation to give here, are sufficient to account for the reliability of this sort of inference. *Human Knowledge* was published in 1948 when Russell was 76 years old. It was his last large philosophical work. In 1959 he published his philosophical autobiography, *My Philosophical Development*, a book that any educated layman can read both enjoyably and profitably.

4. Political Theorist.

From the beginning to the end of his career Russell was interested in questions of political theory. He did not work at developing a position in this area with the same tenacity that he displayed on questions of logic and philosophy, therefore, it is fair to say that he has not had the influence in politics that he has had in logic and philosophy. Nevertheless he was widely read and, on the whole, his writings did provide a defence of democracy against the anti-democratic movements of both the left and the right.

His very first book, *German Social Democracy* (1896), is a critical examination of Marxism in a German context. Shortly after completing his second Tripos and being married for the first time, Russell and Alys spent several months in Berlin studying political economy. As a case study he focussed upon the history of the social democratic movement in Germany. On the whole his book is sympathetic to this movement. Marx himself he finds both tedious, in *Capital*, and inspiring, in the *Communist Manifesto*, a work "almost unsurpassed in literary merit." "For terse eloquence, for biting wit, and for historical insight, it is, to my mind, one of the best pieces of political literature ever produced." (p. 10) When, however, Russell comes to examine the theory which Marx advanced to show the inevitably of communism, he can find little in it which is both true and important. These conclusions, reached very early in his life, remained his opinions to the end.

Despite his rejection of Marxian theory, Russell did in those days regard himself as a socialist but of the democratic variety espoused by the Fabians. He did join that society, but remained a member for only a short time, leaving, it seems, because of personal differences with other leading members. He did not, however, abandon his belief in piecemeal socialism when he left the society.

Russell did not have occasion to write again about questions of political theory until he found himself engulfed in the First World War. That such madness had come about showed the failure of the prevailing philosophy of politics. If, when the war was over, future wars were to be rendered impossible, some political reconstruction would be demanded. So Russell set to work to provide a framework for the way society should be reorganized. His theory was published as *Principles of Social Reconstruction* in 1916; the American edition was renamed *Why Men Fight* by the publisher without consulting Russell. Russell's basic point is that war, and aggressive behaviour generally, can be traced to the thwarting of the principle of growth which is present in each of us and which is on the whole benign. This principle is the source of our impulses and desires, some of which have to be checked if we are to live in harmony with one another. If they are checked in brutal and unreasoning ways, then the energy needed to restrain them out of fear of punishment is directed toward the nourishment of certain destructive impulses and desires, such as the desire for revenge. Russell believed, and here education assumes a key role in his theory, that the impulses and desires requiring discouragement should be allowed to dissipate. When they are gone the child should be taken in hand by a teacher and given reasons to restrain such impulses and desires should they arise again in future. Bottling them up will lead to explosions and, when whole populations are affected, even to wars.

The burden of this book is to argue for a democratic state in which the citizenry have been educated to develop their creative impulses and desires and to control their destructive ones. Control will come, Russell thinks, if children are taught to think. The prevailing educational system takes a child who enjoys thinking and teaches him to stop thinking. Considering this state of affairs led Russell to write one of his best known and most arresting passages:

"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth—more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habits; thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of the well-tried wisdom of the ages. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. It sees man, a feeble speck, surrounded by unfathomable depths of silence; yet it bears itself proudly, as unmoved as if it were lord of the universe. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man." (pp. 165-6)

His rethinking of the foundations of politics led Russell to reject socialism, especially State socialism, as the best solution to the problems of the working classes. Socialism, he thinks, has too narrow a view of the problems of the working man, putting too much emphasis upon income, and tacitly assuming that if income is improved the recipient of it will be made happy. Russell does not think this is true. Replacing the capitalist by the State still leaves the worker alienated from the process of which he is an essential part. What is required for happiness is that the worker's creative impulses be essentially involved in the whole process of production. On the basis of this premiss Russell argues for some form of worker's control of industries. The State would remain outside to be appealed to as an arbitrator when industrial democracy failed to settle a given question.

His little book, *Political Ideals* (1917), delivered as a set of lectures while the war was in progress and published in their entirety only in the United States, makes use of the ideas developed in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. There is, however, one rather important development of the notion of impulse. He divides impulses into creative and possessive ones. This distinction permits him to offer an account of power. Power, or force, is essentially linked to possessive impulses. "Material possessions can be taken by force and enjoyed by the robber. Spiritual possessions cannot be taken in this way." (p. 9) Given this view it is not surprising to find him saying that "the best life is the one in which the creative impulses play the largest part and the possessive impulses the smallest." (p. 8) The argument of the book favours liberal democracy: "It is not one ideal for all men, but a separate ideal for each separate man, that has to be realized if possible." (pp. 5-6)

In 1918 Russell returned to political questions, and especially to the question of which of three competing theories—socialism, anarchism, and syndicalism—promised the best answers to the problem of reconstruction with the least bureaucracy. Of the three he thought syndicalism held the greatest promise and socialism the least. Anarchism, toward which he showed sympathy which later (in 1949 when he wrote a new Preface to the book) he thought unjustified, held a middle position. Syndicalism "is concerned with reforming actual work and the organization of industry, not *merely* with securing greater rewards for work." (p. 75) In attempting to achieve their end syndicalists favour industrial over political action. Industrial action includes strikes, especially the General Strike, boycotts, and sabotage. Its theorists believe that if they can bring about a General Strike they will bring down the State, thus emancipating the workers, because they see the State as the guarantor of the capitalist.

Russell thought pure syndicalism went too far in the direction of radical change. For Britain guild socialism, which owed much to syndicalism, held out the greatest promise. Guild socialists aimed at curtailing the power of the state by gaining autonomy for industry. An organization parallel to the existing political structure would then be set up, with a Guild Congress co-equal to Parliament which together would govern the country. Parliament would look after the interests of the consumer; the Guild Congress would cater to those of the

producers. The practical details of how such a system could be made to work was given neither by the guild socialists nor by Russell in his book, *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism* (in the U.S.A., *Proposed Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism*), published early in 1919.

In 1920 he published *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, written after a journey to Russia to see first-hand what the Bolsheviks were up to. He had traveled up to Leeds in 1917 to join with others on the left in welcoming the Russian Revolution. He went to Russia prepared to approve what he saw, but he was profoundly disappointed and this book registers that disappointment. He believed that "communism is necessary to the world" (p. 6) but Bolshevism was not. Part of his critique charges Bolshevism with an inadequate psychology. The analysis of human motivation he used in *Principles of Social Reconstruction* is expanded and refined: men are moved by desires for food, drink, sex, and shelter—these he calls "primitive desires." When they are threatened, almost any reaction is possible. In addition to these, and often closely associated with them, are four secondary desires—or passions—which, along with the primitive ones, account for nearly all political activity. The four are acquisitiveness, vanity, rivalry, and love of power. The Bolsheviks make the mistake of omitting the last three from their repertory; Russell thinks this a profound mistake. He predicts that love of power, abetted by vanity, will lead to a vast centralized bureaucracy which will, in effect, reestablish class divisions. A more sophisticated state structure based upon a better psychology would avoid this unwelcome prospect, but the Bolsheviks are trapped by their own dogma. He notes this as another reason for displeasure: the Bolsheviks have made of their theories a religion which, to a man of scientific spirit who had believed them progressive, is an appalling turn of events. The lack of democracy, in the sense of self-government, also distresses Russell, and he offers succinct reasons why any system of which he would approve must include self-government. "The grounds for advocating self-government are very familiar: first, that no benevolent despot can be trusted to know and pursue the interests of his subjects; second, that the practice of self-government is the only effective method of political education; third, that it tends to place the preponderance of force on the side of the constitution, and thus to promote order and stable government." (p. 184) These reasons are of a piece with his earlier advocacy of industrial democracy. He had gone to Russia prepared to see the future, but instead he saw that the Bolsheviks had reimposed the Tsarist tyranny without the Tsar. He made the point plainly in his book and found that most of his former political associates now had little use for him. He did not ever have to regret what he said; in 1949 he was able to write in a new Preface that events had proved him more nearly right than his critics.

It was not until 1938 that Russell returned to the foundational questions of politics. By that time he had concluded that "love of power is the chief motive producing the changes which social science has to study." (p. 13) Not surprisingly the book is called *Power: a New Social Analysis*. Love of power he now regards as an infinite desire of man, as is love of glory, and he means by this that they have no limit of satisfaction. They, but especially love of power, are central to all social studies. "In the course of this book I shall be concerned to prove that the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundmental concept in physics. Like energy, power has many forms, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion. No one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other, and there is no one form from which the others are derivative. The attempt to treat one form of power, say wealth, in isolation, can only be partially success-

ful, just as the study of one form of energy will be defective at certain points, unless other forms are taken into account." (pp. 10-11) "To revert to the analogy of physics: power, like energy, must be regarded as continually passing from any one of its forms into any other, and it should be the business of social science to seek the laws of such transformations. The attempt to isolate any one form of power, more especially, in our day, the economic form, has been, and still is, a source of errors of great practical importance." (pp. 11-12) Clearly *Power* is a continuation of the argument he advanced against the Bolsheviks. The book offers an extended analysis of each of the kinds of power, how they can pass into each other, and what can be done to control them.

After the Second World War Russell concerned himself with two large questions of politics, before restating his political philosophy in *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954). The first, the proper relationship between authority and the individual, and the second, the effect of science upon political and social life. *Authority and the Individual* (1949), which was given over the BBC as the first Reith Lectures, goes back to the conceptual framework of *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. The problem is to find a way for our impulses, especially the creative ones, to have an area for their expression in a world where authority has been on the increase. Russell thinks the answer lies in the decentralization of authority. He argues that there should be a world government, now that there are atomic bombs in the arsenals of certain states, but that its authority should be limited to matters of war and peace. Under it the other areas of life where some authority is required should be regulated at the lowest level of government compatible with maintaining public order. The tendency has been for governments to centralize authority, taking up to higher levels what was formerly done at lower levels. They have not done things better, so it is time to decentralize their authority.

He returned to this question in 1951 in *New Hopes for a Changing World*, which also takes up the political impact of science. His argument in that book, written after the explosion of the H-bomb, is that world government is now absolutely essential. It offers the only way of taming the genie that science has released from its bottle. If that genie can be tamed, then all of the genius of science can be turned to making life on earth for all men much happier than it has ever been before. He concludes the book with "The Happy World"—his vision of what might be.

In *The Impact of Science on Society* (1952) he explores all aspects of the way the rise of science has altered human society. In addition to its effect upon our intellects—it has ridded us of many traditional, but unsupported, beliefs—science has led to the rise of industry, with all the benefits that entails, as well as revolutionized warfare, with all the horrors that entails. Its latest product, the H-bomb, has made world government necessary, but it will probably take another war to achieve it. Having looked at these and other matters as objectively as he can, he asks, "Can a scientific society be stable?", that is, can it last a long time? "My conclusion is that a scientific society can be stable given certain conditions. The first of these is a single government of the whole world, possessing a monopoly of armed force and therefore able to enforce peace. The second condition is a general diffusion of prosperity, so that there is no occasion for envy of one part of the world by another. The third condition (which supposes the second fulfilled) is a low birth rate everywhere, so that the population of the world becomes stationary, or nearly so. The fourth condition is the provision for individual initiative both in work and play, and the greatest diffusion of power compatible with maintaining the necessary political and economic framework. The world is a long way from realizing these conditions, and therefore we must expect vast upheavals and

appalling suffering before stability is attained. But, while upheavals and suffering have hitherto been the lot of man, we can now see, however dimly and uncertainly, a possible future culmination in which poverty and war will have been overcome, and fear, where it survives, will have become pathological. The road, I fear, is long, but that is no reason for losing sight of the ultimate hope." (pp. 139-40)

The last book in which he discusses political theory is *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954). The most theoretical, political chapter is "Politically Important Desires," his Nobel Prize (for Literature) acceptance speech. "All human activity is prompted by desire or impulse," (p. 160) establishes at once that his position has not changed since 1916. And when he lists the desires which move men as "acquisitiveness, rivalry, vanity, and love of power," all of which he says are infinite in the sense that they can never be fully satisfied, we find that he has not altered the refinement of the theory he first made public in 1920. The political half of the book is basically a recapitulation of his thinking of the preceding forty years.

5. Pacifist.

In his *Autobiography, 1872-1914*, Russell gives a precise date and time for his conversion to pacifism. He and Alys were staying with the Whiteheads in Cambridge and had been out to Newnham College to hear Gilbert Murray read part of his new translation of *The Hippolytus*. When they returned to the house they found Mrs. Whitehead in great pain, presumably suffering from a heart attack. Her agony and her solitude had a powerful effect on Russell. He records a number of the beliefs and attitudes that underwent change in the five minutes or so after first seeing her suffering, including "Having been an imperialist, I became during those five minutes a pro-Boer and a Pacifist." (p. 146) It was a position that he was to hold, in one form or other, for a very long time.

Until August of 1914 Russell did not have much occasion to act upon his pacifist belief. But when the war broke out he found that he was swept away by anti-war feelings, and that anti-war work must have top prioity in his life. To his utter dismay he found that many who before the war had agreed theoretically with him on pacifism, were just as strongly swept away by pro-war feelings. Some old friends and associates stood firm, however, and they offered him a base from which to work.

He became a founding member of the Union of Democratic Control, most of whose members were highly respected members of the left wings of the Liberal and Labour parties. For it he wrote a pamphlet, *War—the Offspring of Fear* (1914), which anticipates, in a small way, the theory he developed in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. The audience reached by the U.D.C. with its pamphlet series was not likely, in Russell's opinion, to have much, if any, effect on the course of the war. A broader public had to be reached, and he thought that, since the United States was not a belligerent, her population might, if given the right ideas, influence her government to attempt to bring the war to a quick end. He found a ready ally in Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who published a number of Russell's anti-war articles, greatly to the annoyance of many senior members of His Majesty's Government.

It must be stressed that Russell's position was opposition to the war then in progress, what we now call the First World War. He was not, then or ever, opposed to all wars. He was not, then or ever, a complete pacifist in the way, say, Tolstoy, was. He even wrote an essay, "The Ethics of War," (1915), reprinted in *Justice in War-time* (1916), in which he considered whether any wars could be justified, and argued that some could be: (a) some past wars of colon-

ization in which the more civilized drove the less civilized from their land, thus increasing the civilized part of the world; (b) some past (and likely future) wars of principle, such as the American Civil War which abolished slavery and therefore aided progress; (c) some past (and very likely future) wars of self-defence, although it is often difficult to determine whether a given war is a pure specimen of this sort or some other kind dressed up as a war of self-defence. Only wars of prestige are always to be condemned; there are other, and better, ways to settle the differences involved. His published belief that some wars are justified made close work with Quakers and other complete pacifists against the First World War a frequently delicate matter. They would have preferred that his great passion not have such a narrow target.

It must also be stressed that Russell was not pro-German during the First World War. He was often accused of that even by people who should have known better, since they had read his articles. Intensely patriotic, it grieved him greatly when England lost a battle to Germany, but he tried to see the German point-of-view, even while feeling an inclination to hate Germans arising in him, and this his detractors thought evidence of pro-Germanism.

The Union of Democratic Control proved too tame for Russell, so when conscription was bruited and the No-Conscription Fellowship was formed by Clifford Allen, Russell appeared on their doorstep and volunteered to help in any way he could. Since he was past 40 years of age and therefore not himself subject to conscription, he could not be a full member of the Fellowship, but he did become one of their most active supporters. His great weapon was his pen; he could, by this time, write to order. Over the next few years he wrote many articles for *The Tribunal*, the weekly organ of the N.-C.F. He also wrote anonymously, and for one such leaflet, *Two Years' Hard Labour for Refusing to Disobey the Dictates of Conscience*, which concerned the case of Ernest F. Everitt, Russell was arrested, tried, and fined. The N.-C.F. published the transcript of the trial as *Rex vs. Bertrand Russell*—Russell had defended himself—which a magistrate ordered stopped, apparently unsuccessfully, because many copies survive. Since Russell refused to pay the fine, hoping to force the authorities to imprison him, his goods were seized and auctioned. His friends bought them and gave them back to him, thus the fine was paid.

Those in authority had hoped, by arresting him, to get Russell to drop his anti-war activities, but in this they failed. He continued them at the same pitch for another eighteen months, from June 1916 until December 1917. He wrote articles, he gave speeches to whatever audience would listen, he undertook speaking tours, and he ghostwrote for others. A widely read booklet (it went through four printing in four months) was *'I Appeal Unto Caesar,' the Case of the Conscientious Objector* (1917) by Mrs. Henry Hobhouse, with an introduction by Gilbert Murray. It was shown in 1974 by Jo Newberry (*Russell: the Journal of the Bertrand Russell Archives 15*) that Russell wrote the text but conspired with Mrs. Hobhouse to keep it quiet since the propagandistic effect, especially with those in positions of authority, would be diminished if people knew that he had written it.

Late in 1917 he let it be known that with the new year he would be dropping out of pacifist work and resuming philosophical work. A point was made of informing the Government of his intentions; his brother, then a Labour Peer, personally visited the appropriate Ministers. Having concluded that his opposition to the war, whose end now seemed in sight as the United States became more involved, had been fruitless, and that he could give the world much more of more certain value if he resumed what he was unquestionably good at, namely philosophy, Russell felt a certain relief. But he could not abandon his anti-war associates too abruptly, and when, very early in 1918, they required a front-page article

for *The Tribunal*, they turned to Russell and he obliged them. "The German Peace Offer," published 3 January 1918, contained a sentence which the Government claimed insulted an ally. The sentence reads: "The American Garrison which will by that time be occupying England and France, whether or not they will prove efficient against the Germans, will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers, an occupation to which the American Army is accustomed when at home." (It has always seemed to me that it is the next two sentences whose publication galled the authorities, but about which they could manufacture no case: "I do not say that these thoughts are in the mind of the Government. All the evidence tends to show that there are no thoughts whatever in their mind, and that they live from hand to mouth consoling themselves with ignorance and sentimental twaddle.") He was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act with having published a statement likely to prejudice the British Government's relations with the U.S.A. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to six months in prison. Upon appeal his prison sentence was altered from Second to First Division. In the First Division he could have books and writing materials, and he could pay another prisoner to keep his cell clean. During his imprisonment he wrote one of his best books, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, a popular account of the argument of *Principia Mathematica*. He was released from prison on 18 September 1918, having served a little over four months of his sentence.

Although Russell did conclude that his anti-war work did not shorten the war by even one minute, he did think it had some, small beneficial effects. "The war, it seemed to me, was folly, and every bit of energy that could be diverted from the business of killing was so much to the good. This was the reason, not only for oneself refusing to kill, but also for providing as much innocent work as possible. Policemen, who might otherwise have been drafted into the Army, were kept busy making inaccurate reports of pacifist speeches for the benefit of Scotland Yard; prison officials were kept from the front by the need of guarding conscientious objectors; lawyers and lawyers' clerks were occupied with their misdeeds. In one way or another, quite a number of people were prevented from engaging in the official business of killing each other." (p. 209) This was his opinion in 1936 when he published *Which Way to Peace?*

Throughout the inter-war years he kept up a lively interest in wars and rumours of wars; he could be counted upon to lend his name and prestige, and often his speaking and writing abilities, to anti-war causes. He joined the Peace Pledge Union, but he seems to have written nothing for it, perhaps because its official line was that of the complete pacifist. As Hitler rose, so did his fears of another world war. In 1936 he wrote, as already mentioned, *Which Way to Peace?*, a topical book which he never allowed to be reprinted after the Second World War. His concern in it is with the policy Great Britain should adopt given the destructive power of aerial bombing and the increasing likelihood of war due to the policies of the Nazis. He examines a number of alternatives—isolationism, collective security agreements, and alliances—and finds them all wanting. Casting about for a policy he considers the case for complete pacifism, or unilateral disarmament, and, arguing from analogy, by citing Denmark, he concludes that Britain would be better off under this policy than under any of the others. To get such a policy adopted requires that the population free itself of fear, pride, and greed: it is because these feelings are wide-spread that it is unlikely, by argument alone, to free a population of them, so he is not hopeful that war can be avoided.

Although he thinks that only a policy of complete pacifism makes sense for a nation, for the individual a different policy is possible. "Before proceeding further, I wish to repeat, for fear of misunderstanding, the limitations

to which my own pacifism is subject. I am not a believer in the doctrine of non-resistance; I do not desire the abolition of the police; I do not hold that war is always and everywhere a crime. If an international government existed, and were possessed of the only legally permitted armed forces, I should be prepared to support it in suppressing rebellions, since I should regard this as the only means of making peace secure. The evil of war is quantitative, and a small war for a great end may do more good than harm. My belief in absolute pacifism is limited to the present time, and depends upon the destructiveness of air warfare. In other times and other circumstances I should be prepared to consider gains and losses, and to concede that war *might* be worth while. Even in our own day, I am not prepared always to condemn *civil* war; the Spanish Government is obviously right to resist its rebels." (pp. 151-2)

The man who adopts pacifism must avoid becoming fanatical about it, for a fanatical pacifist is an ineffective pacifist. For the forseeable future, he thinks, it is very unlikely that the pacifists will take over the government of Britain, so the individual pacifist is going to have to find within himself the resources to act alone or with a few fellows when war comes. The future of pacifism in 1936 did not appear rosy. For those who read Russell's book and decided to remain pacifists after war broke out in 1939, the future proved to be even less rosy than they had expected, for on 11 February 1941 Russell wrote a long letter to *The New York Times* explaining that he was not opposed to the war then engulfing Europe. His reasons were of a piece with the position he had always defended. This was a war of principle, and Russell approved of the principle: "There came a moment—some will say one moment, some another—when it became evident that Germany would destroy the independence of the democracies one by one if they did not combine in armed defence. From that moment the only hope for democracy was war." (16 February 1941) Because *Which Way to Peace?* had so strongly recommended individual pacifism during the coming war, he must have wished, by keeping the book permanently out of print, not to remind people of his failure to act on his own advice.

Russell spent the war years in the United States, having emigrated there in 1938 partly to escape the coming war. In 1944 he returned to England, and for a decade was a prominent establishment figure, even, it seems, lecturing to Generals at War Colleges. For a short, inglorious period he advocated that the U.S.A. make preemptive war on the U.S.S.R. to prevent it acquiring nuclear weapons. Pacifism seemed a thing of his past, and it is certainly true that it took a back seat, if it had any seat at all, to the activism of his old age.

6. Political Activist.

Russell was taught that political activism was the duty of the Russells from earliest childhood. Of course it was expected of him that he would channel his activism into a political career, as his grandfather had done and his father failed to do, thus ensuring that his activism would bear fruit. After his grandfather's death in 1878 his grandmother continued her interest in political matters, especially Italian unity and the Irish question. In discussing these with Bertrand she impressed upon him the importance of preparing himself to do something about them when he grew up. These lessons obviously took. "My family during four centuries was important in the political life of England, and I was brought up to feel a responsibility which demanded that I should express my opinion on political questions. This feeling is more deeply implanted in me than reason would warrant ...". (*Portraits from Memory*, p. 48)

In his young manhood political activities took second place to his intellectual work. He did find time to agitate, mostly by writing, for free trade,

and, partly through Alys's influence, he undertook to write and speak in favour of woman's suffrage. His pamphlet, *Anti-Suffragist Anxieties* (1910), is an acute analysis of the arguments being advanced against votes for women. Russell found them all bad. In May 1910 he allowed himself to be nominated by the National Union of Suffrage Societies to contest a Parliamentary by-election in Wimbledon. At the time he was a member of the Liberal Party and he based his campaign on Liberal positions as well as woman's suffrage. This manner of proceeding did not please his nominators, and when he lost to the Tory by a margin of 6,964 voltes out of 13, 562 cast, they could not forbear scourging him. Their reaction probably had something to do with the transfer of his allegiance to the movement for adult suffrage.

I have already described his extraordinary work during the First World War on behalf of nearly any group opposed to the war. These searing experiences made it easy for him in later life to aid those causes to which he was willing to give his support. In a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, once his mistress and ever after his friend and confidante, postmarked 16 January 1914, he had complained à propos of his imminent trip to the United States to deliver lectures, that what weighed most heavily on him was the requirement that he produce work to a deadline. He didn't find this easy to do, and went on to say that he lacked the talent to be a journalist. His work during the First World War certainly gave the lie to that remark; he was found to be one of the very few who could be depended upon to turn out *X* words on topic *Y* by time *Z*. After the war was over this newly developed ability provided him with a ready means of earning his living.

The causes in which he was active during the inter-war years were in general those taken up by the anti-communist left. He was especially interested in the reform of education, in the dissemination of information about birth control, in reform of the divorce laws, in work toward peace, and in independence for India. He and his wives of this period, first Dora and then Peter, carried on what seems, in retrospect, to be almost a business of propagandizing for these and many other causes. He stood for Parliament twice during these years, and Dora stood once. Both ran as members of the Labour Party in Chelsea, so their defeats were foregone conclusions.

When he emigrated to the United States in 1938 the scope of his political activism was considerably narrowed. It was partly his reputation as a propagandist that caused the Mayor of New York to cancel his appointment to a Professorship in the College of the City of New York when opposition to it developed among religious groups. But this was only partly the cause; the advanced opinions expressed in his book *Marriage and Morals* (1930) was also an important factor. Reading the book now it is difficult to see what it was that so outraged some readers in the 1930s. The extraordinary abuse heaped upon Russell seems out of all proportion to the qualified opinions he expresses in the book.

Upon returning to England in 1944 Russell spent a decade as, in effect, an establishment politician. He did speak in the House of Lords (to a seat in which he had succeeded his brother in 1931) on the dangers of the atomic bomb, and he did speak and write about the dangers the U.S.S.R. posed to Western civilization. But beyond those matters, he was not very active until early 1955. At Christmastime in 1954 he had read over the BBC his famous essay, "Man's Peril from the Hydrogen Bomb." "Here, then, is the problem I present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?" he wrote. He develops the black consequences of the first alternative, hoping, in this indirect way, to make the second more palatable. He appeals to the neutral nations to combine so as to form a morally powerful group which may, in time, mediate the differences between the two Great Powers. And

he appeals to everyone capable of rational thought to do their bit toward making war obsolete. The tide might be turned, he thinks, by political activity on the part of those here-to-for unpolitical. The concluding paragraph is one of his best: "I cannot believe that this is to be the end. I would have men forget their quarrels for a moment and reflect that, if they will allow themselves to survive, there is every reason to expect the triumphs of the future to exceed immeasurably the triumphs of the past. There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? I appeal, as a human being to human beings: remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, nothing lies before you but universal death." (*Portraits from Memory*, p. 220)

Public response to his broadcast was overwhelming. Something had to be done to channel so much energy into organized activities which just might turn the tide in favour of peace. Russell's first move, suggested by his receipt of a letter from Frédéric Joliet-Curie, an eminent French physicist who was also a member of the Communist Party, was to prepare a manifesto, to be signed only by leading scientists from both East and West, calling for a meeting of scientists whose task it would be to persuade governments to modify their policies. Russell drafted the manifesto which Einstein signed just before he died. The first meeting of scientists, at Pugwash, the summer home of Cyrus Eaton who funded it, in Nova Scotia, was held in 1957. The Pugwash Conferences, as they have come to be called, continue to this day; they are regarded as of importance in reducing the degree of tension between East and West. Russell also saw Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, and tried to persuade him to organize the neutral nations into a bloc. Success here was slower and less conclusively established, but gradually there came to be meetings of the neutrals, although the agendas of their meetings did not include the sort of political activism Russell urged they undertake.

Since the leadership of the neutrals was uncertain, Russell and others hit upon the thought that if Great Britain were divested of nuclear weapons then she could assume the leadership of the neutrals. It was a goal worth working for, and it fitted Britain's historical role, for she had often been outside the balance of power until the balance began to tip and then she had entered to right it again. Russell's attraction to the idea was not new; he had, after all advocated it for Britain in *Which Way to Peace?* in 1936. Now he found many others favourable to the idea, so the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was born early in 1958. Russell was elected President and Canon Lewis John Collins the Chairman. Once again, as he had in the First World War, Russell, who was militantly anti-religious, joined forces with religion to fight the good fight.

The CND was remarkably successful as a mass organization. By the autumn of 1960 it looked as if it might persuade a majority at the Labour Party Conference to adopt a policy of nuclear disarmament for Britain. Indeed Labour did vote to adopt the policy at their meeting in Scarborough, although a later Conference reversed it. But Scarborough proved to be the high-water mark for CND.

CND relied on persuasion and peaceful demonstrations to gain its ends. Despite its success, Russell came to believe that the means which CND favoured were not sufficient to win its end. More direct action was required, in particular civildisobedience. A proposal that members of CND deliberately break the law split the organization into two. Russell's part of it, called The Committee of 100, adopted means, including civil disobedience, which were unlawful. He thought if enough people adopted them, the Government would give in to their demands rather than face the colossal task of dealing with such a multitude of

criminals. The Government had to be tested, so a demonstration was called for 18 February 1961 and Russell demanded that there be at least 2,000 demonstrators or the demonstration be called off. The demonstration went off as planned, but no one was arrested. On 6 August 1961, Hiroshima Day, another demonstration was held at which Russell was stopped from speaking in Hyde Part by the police. The rest of the planned demonstration went on without a hitch. But in Spetember both Russell and his fourth wife, Edith, were commanded, along with other leaders of The Committee of 100, to appear in court in London where they were charged with inciting the population to commit acts of civil disobedience. After trial Russell and Edith drew sentences of two months imprisonment which were later on appeal reduced to one week. This blundering action by the authorities did more to bolster Russell's cause, in the short run at least, than almost any other action imaginable.

In the long run, however, the authorities did have their way. By selecting, at demonstrations, those who were the organizers and administrators of The Committee of 100, for arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment, they effectively crippled it. It never became the force CND had been in its heyday. Russell himself, must bear some responsibility for its decline, for he progressively became more extreme in his published statements. He also became, what he had never been in his long life, anti-American.

In 1957 he addressed an open letter to Krushchev and Eisenhower which he also published in *The New Statesman*. To everyone's surprise Krushchev replied to his letter. This put pressure on Washington and two months later Dulles replied on Eisenhower's behalf. Russell had the correspondence published in a little book, *The Vital Letters of Russell, Krushchev, Dulles* (1958). There is no evidence of his favouring either side in this exchange of letters. When the Cuban missile crisis arose in October, 1961, Russell recalled the earlier exchange and again wrote both Krushchev and Kennedy, but this time there was a decided bias toward the Russian side. Krushchev again replied and his message was noted in Washington. This seems the extent of Russell's influence, but he read it as larger when, in 1963, he published *Unarmed Victory*, which reports his role in this crisis and also in the Sino-Indian dispute.

It was, however, the Vietnam War that fixed his anti-Americanism. Some of his most extreme statements, in a life of extreme statements, were made with regard to it. He matched his words with actions, sponsoring The Russell War Crimes Tribunal to try President Johnson and others *in absentia* for war crimes committed in Vietnam. Of course he wrote a book about it. *War Crimes in Vietnam* (1967) is perhaps his most passionate book.

In his last years, when he was confined by old age to his home in north Wales, his political activism was, as perhaps it had always in the main been, confined to words. He issued statements on nearly every matter that came up; he wrote letters to the press; and he impressed upon his visitors their duty to become activists. His last statement—on the Middle East—was dated 31 January 1970. He died during 2 February 1970, active nearly to the end.

7. Historian and Educator.

Russell's relationship to history is based on a love of reading it which he developed as a child and was a great joy to him throughout his life. In a number of essays he tried to convey to his readers the pleasure they too would experience if they followed his advice and read history books. In addition to these essays about history, he wrote one book which is essentially a political history of China, a long book on the political history of the nineteenth century, and a history of western philosophy.

His first essay in this field, "On History," was published in 1904. "Of all the studies by which men acquire citizenship of the intellectual commonwealth," it begins, "no single one is so indispensable as the study of the past." He goes on to argue that the value of history is because it is true and because it enlarges the imagination and suggests actions and feelings that might never have fallen within the experience of the reader. The man who knows his history will be a better man than he would be if he were ignorant of the past. We come to terms with the past by studying it. That is the only means we have of coming to master it, rather than having it master us.

His work on *Principia Mathematica* required that he study, very carefully, the history of the development of logic during the preceding century, but, aside from certain historical remarks illuminating certain ideas, he did not write up the history of logic. Instead he used what he learned from studying it in his own work. Similarly, the outbreak of the First World War caused him to study the recent history of the belligerents, and in *The Policy of the Entente, 1904-1914; a Reply to Professor Gilbert Murray* (1915), reprinted in *Justice in War-time* (1916), he did put down some of that history but in an argumentative way. It was not the dispassionate historical writing that he loved to read; instead his historical writings of this period are always coloured by his fierce opposition to the war.

After the war he visited both the new Soviet Union (for a few weeks) and China (for a whole year). His book on his Russian visit, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920), is in part an historical work, but its importance lies in its political side. *The Problem of China*, on the other hand, places more emphasis upon the history of China and Japan and of their relations with each other and with the West, than its title would lead one to expect. It is not, however, only an historical work. During his year in China Russell had come greatly to admire the Chinese way of life. It was threatened in all sorts of ways by the West, and he wanted to do what he could to create a set of beliefs about China in his Western readers which would increase the chances of preserving that way of life. Preserving what was best in China required the institution of some reforms—all was not sweetness and light—but he thought that these reforms had to come from the Chinese themselves, foreigners could not provide them. He has some harsh judgments to make about the way foreigners have treated China in the past and recommendations for their future behaviour toward her.

In 1934 Russell published a big book, *Freedom and Organization, 1814-1914*, which attempts "to trace the main causes of political change during the hundred years from 1814 to 1914" (p. 7). Russell, *contra* Marx, finds these causes to be three: "economic technique, political theory, and important individuals." He is prepared to agree with Marx that the first of these is the most important, but he is not prepared to concede that it is the only cause. It cannot, Russell thinks, account for the rise of nation-states. The book covers both European and American history, and unlike more typical history books, it is plain that its author has a strong taste for the various political theories that competed during the nineteenth century.

During his self-imposed exile in the United States during the Second World War Russell wrote a number of pamphlets for E. Haldeman-Julius, a remarkable publisher who, from his publishing house in Girard, Kansas, supplied, for three decades, countless thousands with Little Blue Books dealing with nearly every topic ever thought by anyone to have been included under the rubric "free-thinking." The books were cheap: a nickel for the Little Blue Books, a dime for the Big Blue Books, postpaid. Russell first came to the attention of many of his admirers through his Little and Big Blue Books. *How to Read and Understand History: the Past as the Key to the Future* (1943) appeared as a Big Blue Book.

"My subject is history as a pleasure, as an agreeable and profitable way of spending such leisure as an exacting world may permit. I am not a professional historian, but I have read much history as an amateur. My purpose is to try to say what I have derived from history, and what many others, I am convinced, could derive without aiming at becoming specialists." (p. 4) This essay is intended to inform his readers how, in addition to the pleasure they will immediately enjoy from reading well-written books of history, they will be improved by the experience. They will better understand events both large and small when they see them in their historical setting. The message is familiar: it is that of "On History" with a bit more emphasis on the pleasure to be had from reading history.

A good example of the sort of pleasure—and profit—Russell himself found in historical reading is in *Which Way to Peace?* To illustrate what can happen when a belief comes to be fanatically held, he turns to history: "Fanaticism springs from the pursuit of some one narrow end at the expense of all others. A remarkable example is given in Henry C. Lea's *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*. A small sect grew up in Italy which held the heretical opinion that it is wicked to eat meat. No one would have objected to vegetarianism as a practice, but as an ethical doctrine it came within the purview of the Inquisition. The sect was persecuted and its adherents took refuge in the mountains, from which they made descents as freebooters, since the barren summits afforded no sustenance. At length armed bands surrounded them, and made their marauding expeditions impossible, but they still managed, by night attacks, to kill a certain number of their besiegers. It was only animals that their creed forbade them to eat; as to cannibalism, it was silent. Accordingly they subsisted upon the flesh of their persecutors. At length they were overcome, and their leader, without a groan, endured the most appalling tortures, which were ended at last by his death." (pp. 200-1) Russell took delight in absurd examples, and his delight was compounded when the instance could be found in history books.

His major effort during the years of the Second World War was the writing of *A History of Western Philosophy, and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, published in 1945 in the U.S.A. but a year later in Great Britain because of the paper shortage. The subtitle of the book provides a succinct summary of its theme. It is not the sort of history of philosophy one consults when one wants to find out, say, Plato's opinion on some specific topic, although there is much along that line in the book. It is really much more valuable as a source of what might be wrong with Plato's opinions, because it is the only history of philosophy we have which is written by a philosopher of the first rank. In reading it, one learns a great deal about Russell's position on a wide variety of matters which he would never have had occasion to address had he not written this book. He followed his own advice (see below) by making it interesting reading, but, some critics have maintained, only at the price of making it unreliable history. This criticism would probably not faze Russell, for it is unlikely his intention was to write a reliable history, and, anyway, his personality was too strong for that task. He could not be expected to put down views which were manifestly wrong in a sympathetic way; he had to tell his readers why they were wrong. He was that sort of man.

When Russell was invited to deliver the second Hermon Ould Memorial Lecture in 1954 he chose as his title, *History as an Art*. He raises at once the old question of whether history is an art or a science, and replies that it is both. In getting its facts straight (and, if possible, discovering causal laws linking sets of facts) it is a science, but it takes art to bring these discoveries to

the consumer, including the general reader. This requirement demands that history books be interesting, otherwise the readership will be small. If they are interesting, people will read them, and they will be improved by reading them, for they will better understand their place in the scheme of things than they formerly did. Russell offers a delightful account of what he has learned from history. Here is a sample: "The Emperor Frederick II, for example, most certainly does not deserve to be imitated, but he makes a splendid piece in one's mental furniture. The Wonder of the World, tramping hither and thither with his menagerie, completed at last by his Prime Minister in a cage, debating with Moslem sages, winning crusades in spite of being excommunicate, is a figure that I should be sorry not to know about." (p. 16-17) He has some advice for historians on how history should be written in order to reach a wide audience. If the readership of history books can be increased, there is likely to be an increase of sanity in the world and hence much less to fear from the H-bomb.

On his ninetieth birthday Russell published *History of the World in Epitome (for Use in Martian Infant Schools)*, a tiny book whose entire text reads: "Since Adam and Eve ate the apple, man has never refrained from any folly of which he was capable." Then comes "The End" opposite a photograph of a mushroom cloud.

Russell's first writing on education is a chapter in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. The theory of growth which he advances in that book obviously demands as a corollary a theory of education which will maximize it. In general, the theory Russell sketches there is what is called "progressive education." Its basic assumption is that children are fundamentally good, and become bad by being thwarted in one way or other. This theory, which owes much to John Dewey, is in sharp contrast to an older view which assumed childish nature to be bad and was made good only by rote-learning enforced by corporeal punishment. Progressivists argued that if one permitted the child to develop, teaching it self-control when appropriate or required, a better adult would emerge. This is Russell's position, and he put special emphasis on teaching the child to think.

After his second marriage Russell and Dora soon had two children to educate. Believing his own experience of private tuition on the whole to be bad, largely because it deprived him of companions his own age, he resolved that his children should be sent to school. After looking into all the likely schools, including the most progressive ones, he concluded that none of them were progressive enough, so he and Dora decided to establish a school in which they would enrol their own children among others. The school was named Beacon Hill School after its location and both of the Russells were teachers in it, although there were a number of other teachers too. To offer guidance and to fix his own ideas, Russell wrote *On Education, especially in Early Childhood* (1926). His position in this book is a full development of the ideas sketched in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*. Children are growing things; their growth, like that of plants and animals, should be treated with loving care. By example and reasoned discussion their growth can be kept to the right direction. Since they have a natural curiosity, it is easy for an imaginative teacher to fill their need for knowledge. Self-discipline can be built up, so that external discipline is rarely required. On paper Russell presents a persuasive case for taking this direction in education.

In practice, however, he found matters did not go as theory said they would. This was partly due to the nature of the children they were sent as pupils, many of whom would have tried the patience of a dead saint. He had been unwise to advertise the School as he did, so it attracted mostly "problem children" who were not improved by being thrown in with others of the same kind. The Russells

and their teachers did try to run the school as theory demanded, and, with some of the pupils, they had considerable success. On the whole, however, Russell judged the school a failure.

When he separated from Dora and left Beacon Hill School in 1932 he published his second, and last, book on education. *Education and the Social Order* concerns two conflicting aims of education. On the one hand, the State wants the schools to turn out dependable citizens; on the other hand, the advancement of knowledge requires that the schools develop the best talents each pupil has to the highest degree. It is, of course, not only the advancement of knowledge that makes the latter demand, it is also all of those who believe in human potential and think it has not yet been fully realized. The State, however, controls most of the schools, so it is more likely to prevail. Russell's book, then, is aimed at the citizenry in the hope that if they are aroused they will demand the reform of education along the lines he lays down in his book. The reform required is daunting: the elimination of wars of large-scale and the elimination of superstition, just as starters. Russell always thought on a grand scale.

In a pamphlet, *Education for Democracy* (1934), Russell assumes that democracy is worth preserving and asks what sort of citizen is required if it is to survive. Contradictory qualities seem demanded: the citizen must be confident of his own judgment, but he must also be willing to submit to the majority when the vote goes against him on an issue or in an election. His emotions, therefore, must be under the control of his intellect, and this poses a problem because only the intellect is thought to fall within the province of schools. Since teachers are not supposed to deal with the emotions directly, they must find a way to deal with them indirectly. Russell has much good advice to offer teachers (his audience was a teachers' association) on how to get at this matter without raising the fury of the parents of their pupils.

On 20 January 1941 Russell debated Mortimer J. Adler in Chicago on the right answer to the question, "Are there absolute principles on which education should be founded?" Adler, who had the affirmative side, offered an Aristotelian defence by beginning with the proposition that human nature is everywhere the same, and proceeding to other sweeping statements, some deductive consequences of others. Russell has a rather easy time of exploding these propositions by citing counter-examples to them. He argues that there is a real danger in absolute principles of education, especially when they are held by government officials. "So you get at once a complete uniformity, a complete absence of liberty, a complete impossibility of progress, a stereotyped state where everybody has to think what the government thinks." (p. 13) The antidote is a small dose of scepticism. A healthy scepticism on these matters allows progressive change; Adler's position, consistently maintained by rulers throughout history, would have prevented all change, even that change which everyone, including Adler, would call good.

In later life Russell continued to write occasionally on educational topics, but these writings are of a piece with those already discussed. The advent of the atomic and hydrogen bombs did, however, add urgency to his message. A population that has been taught to think for itself is less likely to follow a madman to destruction.

8. Popular Writer.

Almost from the start of his career Russell thought of himself as reaching a wide audience through his writings. In "My Mental Development," published in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (1944), edited by P.A. Schilpp, he recalled

a scene which had stuck in his memory for nearly fifty years. "I remember a spring morning when I walked in the Tiergarten, and planned to write a series of books in the philosophy of the sciences, growing gradually more concrete as I passed from mathematics to biology; I thought I would also write a series of books on social and political questions, growing gradually more abstract. At last I would achieve a Hegelian synthesis in an encyclopaedic work dealing equally with theory and practice. The scheme was inspired by Hegel, and yet something of it survived the change in my philosophy. The moment had had a certain importance: I can still, in memory, feel the squelching of melting snow beneath my feet, and smell the damp earth that promised the end of winter." (p. 11) This happened in 1895 before Russell had thrown off the Hegelian influence of his Cambridge years. In "Reflections on My Eightieth Birthday," reprinted in *Portraits from Memory* (1956), he again recalls his walk in the Tiergarten, and remarks, "Except for the final synthesis, which still eludes me, I have written these books. They have been acclaimed and praised, and the thoughts of many men and women have been affected by them. To this extent I have succeeded." (p. 56) By implication Russell intends us to see his popular writings as part of the grand scheme whose final stage he was unable to complete.

Russell's first really popular work is "The Free Man's Worship," which, he tells us in *Portraits from Memory, and Other Essays* (1956) "expressed the outcome" (p. 35) of his profound experience at seeing Mrs. Whitehead in agony. It had been preceded, in 1901, by "Recent Work in the Philosophy of Mathematics," reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* (1918) as "Mathematics and the Metaphysicians," where he noted in the Preface that "Its tone is partly explained by the fact that the editor begged me to make the article 'as romantic as possible'." (p. vi) In that same place he calls these two essays "entirely popular."

His career as a popular writer, then, dates back nearly to the beginning of his work, but it wasn't until the First World War that he really put his talents to work. The earlier essays had been grace notes on the serious symphonic works being produced. They were, in large part, directed to a small elite who could enjoy the good things of life. But his views about the war demanded that he reach a much wider audience. He set to work to do it, and at war's end he found himself with a large public who would attempt to read almost anything he published, and would certainly read those of his writings they could understand. He found magazine editors wanting articles and reviews, and publishers demanding books on all sorts of topics. He could make his living by his pen, and, since he had given away his inheritance, his work was cut out for him.

Many of the books discussed in early sections of this essay are popular works. There are some titles, however, that were written to fulfil a publisher's need but also, and not so incidentally, to make money. Both *The ABC of Atoms* (1923) and *The ABC of Relativity* (1925) were written for these two purposes. Both are derivative works—Russell studied the technical literature and summarized it for the layman—but both also, especially in their choice of examples, have distinctively Russellian touches. In *The ABC of Atoms* he makes a rather striking prediction: "It is remarkable that, like Einstein's theory of gravitation, a great deal of the work on the structure of the atom was done during the war. It is probable that it will ultimately be used for making more deadly explosives and projectiles than any yet invented." (p. 11) A third book in this series was advertised as in preparation, but *The ABC of the Stars* was never published and there is no evidence that Russell ever worked on it.

Two tiny books, *Icarus, or the Future of Science* (1925) and *What I Believe* (1925), were Russell's contributions to the Today and Tomorrow Series, an immensely popular range of essay-length books. *Icarus* deals with his vision of the future of science, a theme to which he returned many times in later books and

essays; *What I Believe* is, of course, autobiographical. For Russell the writing of such books was like taking candy from babies.

He wrote up the philosophical position he was developing, more technically, in *The Analysis of Mind* and *The Analysis of Matter*, under the title *An Outline of Philosophy* (*Philosophy* in the U.S.A.) in 1927. This book, which was heavily promoted in the United States, had a wide sale. It is a popular book, but, unlike some of his popular books, it is not exactly a bedtime book. Professional philosophers can learn much from it, for example, concerning his position in ethics. He abandons, in this book, the ethical position of G.E. Moore, which he formerly held, partly because of criticisms made of his version of it by George Santayana. "I now think," he writes, "that good and bad are derivative from desire." (p. 238) It was a position he was to hold for the rest of his life.

It was also in 1927 that he gave what has proved to be his most popular lecture. *Why I am not a Christian* is a very polemical work; Russell is out to persuade, not to convince. For the anti-religious the lecture was electrifying, a famous man was stating their case plainly; for the religious it was very painful, for they could see, or thought they could see, fallacies in his reasoning, but they could not command the flair to deal with Russell on his own level. The lecture has, to this day, continued to help those wavering on the line of irreligion to pass over. In 1957 it was reprinted in *Why I am not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, a book which gathers together many of his popular writings, not all of which are unappreciative of religion.

When The Modern Library approached Russell in 1927 to make a selection of his writings for this recently launched series, he responded by gathering together essays and chapters of his published books dating from 1903 to 1925. He wrote an introduction for the volume which ties the essays together by means of an autobiographical thread. This book was never published in Great Britain.

Sceptical Essays (1928) collects ten essays written between 1919 and 1927, with both an introductory and a concluding essay specially written for the book. The theme of the book, whose topics are wide-ranging, is stated by Russell in the first two sentences: "I wish to propose for the reader's favourable consideration a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine is this: that it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true." (p. 11) No doubt part of his intention was to shock, but it could not only have been to shock, because by this time he knew that there were large numbers of readers who responded favourably to such a challenge.

His next two popular books, *Marriage and Morals* (1929) and *The Conquest of Happiness* (1930), have had the widest readership. They treat their subjects in the way he recommended children be taught. In discussing the treatment of children by most parents and most teachers he had complained that too often their response was "Don't!" without asking themselves whether what was being prohibited was harmful or otherwise bad. With regard to both marriage and human happiness prohibitions had grown up about which it was sensible to ask the same question. He found when he did that the things prohibited were, in very many cases, not harmful, but instead were pleasurable. Defence of the prohibition, then, is defence of a kind of cruelty, something Russell always hated. So he recommended that many prohibitions be set aside, and this caused fury in the breasts of the righteous. But the books sold and sold and sold, which gladdened the heart of a rather impecunious Russell during the Great Depression.

In 1931 he returned to an old theme with the publication of *The Scientific Outlook*. After an account of scientific knowledge, its relationship to religion, and the various techniques that the various disciplines have developed to advance our knowledge of the world, he turns to an examination of what the

scientific society of the future will be like. He is relentless in his vision of the regimentation which will come if it is scientists who rule. The loss of individuality is such a world, where human robots are valued for their predictability, is laid out in detail. None of his other writings, in my opinion, display the power of his imagination so effectively as Part III of this book does. When Aldous Huxley brought out *Brave New World* the next year, Russell complained to his own publisher, Stanley Unwin, that Huxley appeared to have fictionalized this portion of *The Scientific Outlook*. It cannot be denied that there are striking similarities between the two books, but if mimicry is flattery, perhaps Russell should have been pleased.

Two other books of the 1930s were aimed at popular audiences. *Religion and Science* (1935) was written to order for the Home University Library. Its contents are predictable: Russell's fears of organized religions and his hopes and fears of science are worked out in tandem. It is a highly readable book, full of surprising information, especially by way of its examples. *In Praise of Idleness, and Other Essays* (1935) brings together six essays written between 1929 and 1934 and adds nine fresh ones to them. Nearly all of the essays deal with social questions of one sort or other, and one of them makes plain why Russell rejects both Fascism and Communism. The lead essay, which makes a rather surprising defence of leisure, is Russell at his best.

After the Second World War he republished some of his Haldeman-Julius pamphlets, along with other essays, in *Unpopular Essays*. In the Preface he accounts for the title. "A word as to the title. In the Preface to my *Human Knowledge* I said that I was writing not only for professional philosophers, and that 'philosophy proper deals with matters of interest to the general educated public.' Reviewers took me to task, saying they found parts of the book difficult, and implying that my words were such as to mislead purchasers. I do not wish to expose myself again to this charge; I will therefore confess that there are several sentences in the present volume which some unusually stupid children of ten might find a little puzzling. On this ground I do not claim that the essays are popular; and if not popular, then 'unpopular.'" (p. 5) The same impish humour is to be found in a number of the papers, but especially in "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish". Here is one sample: "I am sometimes shocked by the blasphemies of those who think themselves pious—for instance, the nuns who never take a bath without wearing a bathrobe all the time. When asked why, since no man can see them, they reply: 'Oh, but you forget the good God.' Apparently they conceive of the Deity as a Peeping Tom, whose omnipotence enables Him to see through bathroom walls, but who is foiled by bathrobes. This view strikes me as curious." (p. 100) The book is delightful to read, up to and including the last essay, "Obituary," originally read on the BBC in 1937. It is Russell's own obituary, written by him in the style of *The Times*.

There were three more volumes of essays to come, two of them posthumous. *Fact and Fiction* (1961) collects essays written between 1952 and 1961. The titles of its parts, "Books that Influenced Me in Youth," "Politics and Education,""Divertissements," and "Peace and War" show the polymath still at work during his eighth decade on earth. The two posthumous collections are *Bertrand Russell's America, his Transatlantic Travels and Writings, Volume One, 1896-1945* (1973) and *Mortals and Others: Bertrand Russell's American Essays, Volume One, 1931-1935* (1975) The first of these reprints very nearly all of Russell's writings on America for the period covered, and the second collects the little essays he wrote each week for the Hearst newspaper chain. The range of subject matter in the two books is immense, everything from philosophy and war to good cigars and lipstick. Whatever the topic it gets a Russellian touch. Here is a passage from "Who May Use Lipstick?" He is making the point that an examina-

tion of the classes of women prohibited from wearing lipstick reveal something of the "conventional ideas of ethical merit." "Female ministers of religion, while they should be neat in their person, should not have any such adornments as may be supposed calculated to attract the male sex, unless they hail from Southern California. While they are engaged in exhorting us to a life of self-denial, there should be no obvious sign that they do not practise what they preach." (*Mortals and Others*, p. 26) This would be identifiable as Russell's prose even if published anonymously.

During the years when he was most active in the cause of nuclear disarmament he wrote two books, *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (1959) and *Has Man a Future?* (1961), which were calculated to educate a wide public to the dangers of nuclear warfare. He did not intend these books to be mere tracts thrown off as part of his campaign, in the way some of his writings at this time were. They were aimed at the general reader, but not necessarily a reader ready to march in a demonstration. Instead the reader might one day be in a place to do a bit to make nuclear war less likely, but would be unable to act without the information that Russell had supplied. Russell was thinking of every contingency. These books are like nearly all of his popular writings, making judgments and offering advice, and, above all, exhorting his readers to think about the abomination let loose in their midst.

Around the time of his eightieth birthday Russell suddenly felt the desire to write fiction. He had had that desire before, at the time *Principia Mathematica* was going through the press and he was in love with Lady Ottoline Morrell. At that time he speant a lot of his creative energy on a novelette, *The Perplexities of John Forstice*, parts of which were written by Lady Ottoline. All those to whom it was shown judged it a failure, so it lay in limbo until it was published in *The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell* in 1972.

His second urge produced surer fruit. Two collections were published. The first, *Satan in the Suburbs, and Other Stories* (1953), is a collection of short stories on various fantastic themes. They are spontaneous productions of his imagination. "I should be very sorry," he wrote of them, "if it were supposed that the stories are meant to point a moral or illustrate a doctrine." (p. 7) They are for entertainment only. The second set, *Nightmares of Eminent Persons, and Other Stories* (1954) contains ten nightmares and two longish stories. There are nightmares of Stalin, Eisenhower, and Acheson, as well as those of the psychoanalyst, the existentialist, the metaphysician, and the mathematician. The nightmares are fun, because he is able to use his great store of knowledge and his extraordinary powers of imagination in them. The mathematician, for instance, enters on a timeless Platonic realm where the numbers all have their assigned places. To his astonishment he finds that they are kept in order by Pi, the master of ceremonies, whose face is masked since "it was understood that none could behold it and live." (p. 41) Pi's way of maintaining order is to threaten any disorderly number with incommensurability!

The contents of both these volumes are reprinted in *The Collected Stories of Bertrand Russell* (1972), along with *The Perplexities of John Forstice* and other unpublished material. The last consists largely of transcriptions of tape recordings made by Russell in his old age. They are valuable for their autobiographical content and as samples of the way Russell talked.

9. Autobiographer.

Russell was never reticent about using his own experience in his writings; one comes upon autobiographical tidbits in many of his books. These sallies, frequently delightful in themselves, proved of great value to Russell's principal

biographer, Ronald W. Clark, whose book, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (1975), is now, and likely to remain for a long time, the standard account of its subject. To an earlier biographer, Alan Wood, Russell proved to be even more directly helpful: he supplied Wood with a lot of information that only he himself could have known.

By the time *Principia Mathematica* was going through the press, Russell knew there was wide-spread interest in his life, although he was then only forty, so he wrote, during those years, a short autobiography which now seems to be lost. We know he wrote it because he sent it to Lady Ottoline for her to comment on it; what happened to it after that remains a mystery. Except for brief autobiographical accounts, like that in *Selected Papers of Bertrand Russell* (1927) in The Modern Library, he did not think again about writing his whole life until the early 1930s. Around 1930 he was searching for ideas for books likely to earn him money, and he thought of writing *My First Fifty Years*, which would have carried his life up to 1922 and the start of his family. With Russell books had a way of getting written in his head almost at once. He set to work and soon produced a draft of the work, but, when he saw what he had written, he realized that it could not be published at that time. Too many people were still alive. Lady Ottoline to whom it was shown did not like what he had written of their relationship, and it was very likely that others would have similar objections. The manuscript was set aside to be published only later, probably not until after Russell's death.

His parents, however, were safely dead so he could edit their papers and tell their story and that of *their* parents. With the death of Frank in 1931 all surviving family papers had come to him. He and Peter set about preparing them for publication. Two fat volumes emerged and the question of a publisher arose. In the 1930s the publication of the papers of two minor Victorians who had died young and been dead for over fifty years did not seem economically feasible, even if they were Bertrand Russell's parents. His popularity was, after all, unlikely to rub off on them. Leonard and Virginia Woolf, who like Russell were products of Victorian times, finally agreed to take them for their Hogarth Press. Handsome volumes were produced, but sales were slow. *The Amberley Papers: the Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley* (1937) are indispensable for the understanding of Russell's own life.

After the Second World War he took out his manuscript of "My First Fifty Years" and set to work to put it into final form. It struck him, on reading it, as short and, casting about for ways to lengthen it, he hit upon the idea of printing, along with each of its sections, a selection of letters he had received during the period. The correspondence section could occasionally include documents important to his history, for example, the Everitt leaflet and *The Tribunal* article for publishing both of which he had been arrested. By fleshing out the rather thin account of his life in this way, he produced two respectable volumes, which he sent to Stanley Unwin with instructions that they were only to be published after his death.

His fame and his new respectability—he was awarded both the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950—made him the darling of the BBC. He was a superb broadcaster; he could tailor what he had to say to fit exactly the time allowed, just as he could tailor changes in his writing to cause the printer the least work. His voice and his diction fitted the medium of radio very well; he sounded like someone from the remote past who had very modern ideas; and he had had such extraordinary experiences and had known such legendary people.

Three series out of the many programmes he broadcast are of special interest for this section. The first two are published in *Portraits from Memory, and Other Essays* (1956). "Six Autobiographical Talks" is the first of them; in these he tells us why he became a philosopher, who had influenced him, what he had exper-

ienced as a pacifist during the First World War, why he had taken up politics, and, finally, what has happened to his hopes and his fears over the years. The other series was "Portraits from Memory." These talks offer us his picture and his assessment of some contemporaries he had known: George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, George Santayana, Alfred North Whitehead, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and D.H. Lawrence are all epitomized. Another portrait from memory was of John Maynard Keynes and Lytton Strachey; it is published in the first volume of his autobiography. These accounts are valuable not only for what they tell us of their subjects, but also for what they reveal of Russell's own attitudes toward them. The third series, "Books that Influenced Me in Youth," is printed in *Fact and Fiction* (1961). Here he discharges his great debt to Shelley, who has pride of place in the list. Tribute is paid to many others, including Shakespeare, Swift, Turgenev, Paine, and to a long list of historians. To have so many self-conscious writings is a boon to those who study Russell's thought, for they provide clues, and sometimes outright answers, to the problems of interpretation that arise.

The expense of his activities against the Vietnam War led Russell to decide to authorize publication of his autobiography in order to raise money for The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, the organization carrying on his political work. Accordingly, he instructed a reluctant Unwin to send him the manuscript so that it could be prepared for immediate publication. It had to be edited, since some were alive who might feel themselves libeled by what Russell had written about them on the assumption they were dead. (Under British law the dead cannot be libeled.) The two volumes in manuscript were quickly readied for publication and they appeared in 1967 and 1968. They covered Russell's life up to his return to Britain in 1944, but there they stopped. Since Russell was still alive, it would seem odd if his own story of his life stopped in 1944. So another volume was written, but in sharp contrast to the leisurely composition of the first two in great it was put together in a few months, and was brought out in 1969. The correspondence sections of it are, in large part, filled with political documents which had not found their way into any other of his books. Critics, therefore, found Volume III less satisfactory than the earlier ones which were highly praised for both their style and their frankness. A very long life had been recorded by its central character almost to the end. Russell died on 2 February 1970 in his ninety-eighth year.

Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto

John G. Slater
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